

## discourse representation of dialogic principles in teacher-learner communication

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**Abstract.** This article presents a consideration of the problem of discourse representation of pedagogic dialogue in teacher-learner interactions. The functional parameters inherent in the pedagogical process condition an understanding of pedagogic dialogue as a personality-centered type of communication based on the principles of value oriented treatment, alterocentrism, personal inclusion, metaposition of the teacher, personal authenticity and thereby distinguished from the liberal and democratic paradigm. As a special challenge for this study there has been elaborated a scheme of dialogic discourse specified in corresponding discourse patterns, markers and speech acts. The focus is made on those discourse elements featuring the principles of pedagogic dialogue. In the course of inclusive observation conducted on the basis of this scheme there were determined three basic communication styles featuring different levels of communicative disposition: dialogic, semi-dialogic and monologic. The statistics reveal comparatively low percentage of young teachers possessing dialogic dispositions and strategies in pedagogic communication which calls for certain alterations in the system of teacher training as well as personality development of future educators.

**Keywords:** *dialogic discourse, teacher-learner communication, value oriented treatment, alterocentrism, discourse analysis.*

**Зарічна Олена.** Дискурсивна репрезентація принципів діалогу у спілкуванні вчителя й учнів.

**Анотація.** У статті розглянуто проблему дискурсивної репрезентації педагогічного діалогу у взаємодії учителів й учнів. Функціональні параметри педагогічного процесу зумовлюють розуміння педагогічного діалогу як особистісно-зорієнтованого типу спілкування, що ґрунтується на принципах ціннісного ставлення, домінанта на Іншому, особистісного включення, позиції позазнаходження і особистісної автентичності, що є альтернативним баченням відносно ліберально-демократичної концепції діалогу. У контексті даного дослідження було розроблено схему діалогічного дискурсу, специфіковану у відповідних дискурсивних патернах, маркерах і мовленнєвих актах. Особлива увага була приділена елементам дискурсу, які відображають принципи педагогічного діалогу. У ході включеного спостереження, проведеного у контексті цього дослідження, було визначено три основні комунікативні стилі, виражені у різних рівнях діалогічної диспозиції: діалогічний, напівдіалогічний і монологічний. Статистичні дані виявляють порівняно низький відсоток молодих учителів, які володіють діалогічною диспозицією і відповідними стратегіями педагогічного спілкування, що викликає потребу певних змін у системі професійної підготовки учителів, а також їхнього особистісного розвитку.

**Ключові слова:** *діалогічний дискурс, спілкування учителя і учнів, ціннісне ставлення, домінанта на Іншому, дискурс-аналіз.*

## 1. Introduction

In view of the uprising pursuit of dialogic policies in education as well as in all spheres of social intercourse dialogic communication competence is regarded as one of the pivotal teaching competences and thus an important aspect of teacher students' skill building.

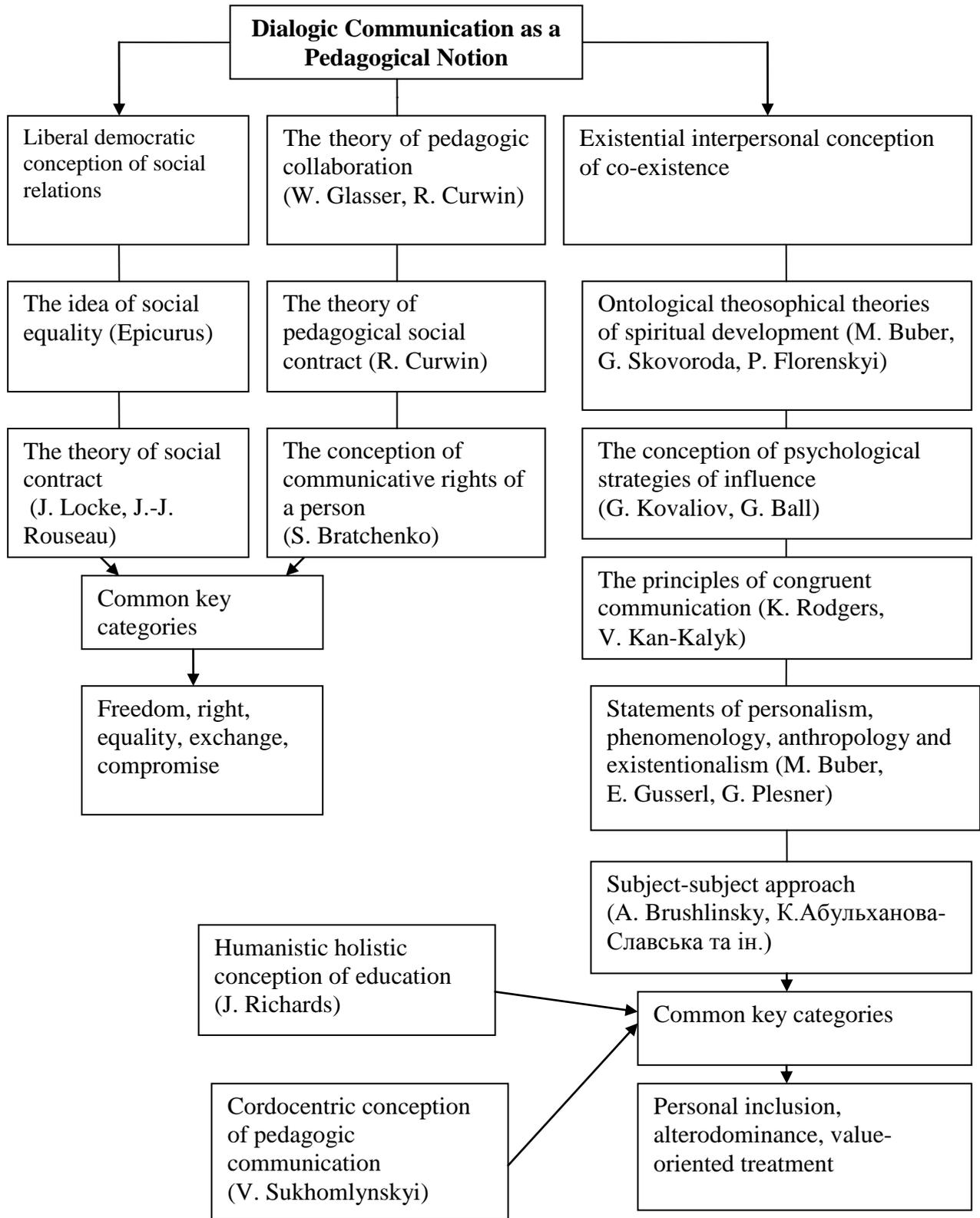
A methodological analysis of the pedagogic conceptions of dialogue conducted in the context of this study, exposed the existence of three basically divergent approaches incorporated in the system of pedagogic views: the didactic theory of dialogue, the democratic dialogic paradigm and the one originating from existential philosophic trends.

The didactic approach represents a view defining dialogue as a heuristic method of instruction ensuring activization of the learners' cognitive activity through leading them to independent reasoning and individual inferences via an elaborate set of questions and cues (Kaminskaya, 2004).

The democratic dialogic paradigm is based upon the categorical line “freedom – right – equality – compromise” (Epicurus, J. Locke, J.-J. Rousseau). These are also seen as the principles of dialogue. In the framework of pedagogy it is seen as a system of specially designed open interactions serving certain educational purposes and involving communicative equality, building partnerships, collaboration and free informational and conceptual interchange (Biriukova, Labunskaya,).

Conversely, the existentialistic humanistic conception, to which this research is attached, regards dialogue as a personality-centered form of communication, converting the formal contextually based teacher-student interactions into spiritually enriching intellectual and emotional co-existence mainly directed at meeting the essentially human needs of acceptance and belonging, recognition and interpersonal contact (Bakhtin, 1979; Volodko, 1999). The categorical framework has quite a different quality features, i.e. “value oriented treatment – alterocentrism – personal inclusion – metaposition of the teacher – personal authenticity” (Ball, 2001, Buber, 1995), in which value oriented treatment is viewed as recognizing the child as an ultimate value rather than the object of instruction, alterocentrism as dominance of the Other One (after M. Buber), personal inclusion as involvement in the child's life and metaposition (M. Bakhtin) as a caring non-intrusive observant position synthesizing cognitive abstraction and esthetic perception of the child as a unique and significant being.

These seemingly contrasting accounts of the nature of dialogue in pedagogy are as much a multiform approach as a point of confusion on what specific functional resources, and namely those of pedagogic discourse, are or should be brought into action in expressing the dialogic intentions and ensuring their realization.



**Fig. 1.**

While the typical dialogic discourse in the didactic type is the Socratic stepwise evolvement of reasoning though back-and-forth form of question and answer, challenge and response (Burbules, 2001), the democratic dialogic strategy of building teacher-learner relationships is featured by quite different discursive

patterns related not to the quest of truth but rather to mutual consideration of the powers and responsibilities of the parties, their agreement and interaction in pursuing the common cause.

The existentialistic approach, however, tends to emphasize the interpersonal, largely human-to-human, parameters of pedagogic interaction and calls for a special form of verbal representation accordingly. What particular discourse patterns, markers and verbal acts are intentionally and functionally correlative to dialogic dispositions? Through what discursive practices is value oriented treatment or alterocentric position to be realized?

### **Statement of purpose**

Based on a survey of prior research, a special challenge for this study was to explore and clarify what discourse patterns and verbal acts comply with the objectives of dialogic communication and ensure its introduction and functioning, what special discourse techniques enhance and facilitate interpersonal dialogue. As a necessary supplement to this elaboration, there logically ensued a level distribution of discursive patterns in young teachers according to their dialogic content.

### **3. The study**

The basic tool for dialogic communication is undoubtedly the language, the masterly use of which is indispensable in pursuing pedagogic aims of teacher-learner dialogue. This necessitates a consideration of discourse parameters responsible for verbal representation of dialogic disposition on teacher-learner interaction.

Specifying the nature of pedagogic dialogue not as a sequence of communicative acts within the classroom academic frame, but rather as a term of culture, we define it as a three-dimensional phenomenon involving the intrapersonal (subject positioning), the interpersonal (teacher-learner communicative mode) and intragroup (i.e. group cohesiveness) parameters. These served as fundamental criteria in determining the character of the discourse patterns representing the dialogic communicative style as well as in defining the levels of their representation in teachers' communicative behaviour.

The discourse analysis completed in the context of this study predisposed identification of those teacher's utterances which the teacher intentionally introduces into the sequence with the purpose of constructing dialogic relations with the learners based upon the dialogic principles of value oriented treatment, alterocentrism, personal inclusion, metaposition of the teacher, personal authenticity.

Initially, the text analysis was conducted in several stages: the first stage involved theoretical empirical study resulting in an elaborated scheme of dialogic discourse acts on the bases of the functional model of pedagogic discourse compiled by Sinclair, J.McH. and Coulthard (1975), R.M. customized by L. Ushakova (2003:37). According to this model, pedagogic discourse is a system of frame (the

micro theme border), focal (the message border), initiating, reactive, feedback communicative acts gradually combined into cycles. The customized model of the discourse analysis scheme is featured in Table 1.

Table 1

### Discourse patterns featuring dialogic dispositions in teacher-learner communication

Discourse marker	Representation	Aims and objectives
	<b>Communicative acts of initiation</b>	
Incentive starters	Phatic expressions, I-messages, we-messages, non-formal interrogatives, disjunctive question forms.	Establishing contact, expressing personal interest and collaborative intentions.
Meta-statement inner/threshold	"Comment of a comment" utterances, statement of intent while specifying upon topical issues: "Now I want to ask the following question...", "Let us consider the following..."	Marking the introductory line of the discursive cycle, enhancing individual meaning-making and addressing personal experience. Establishing alterocentric position.
Query for self-representation	Questions representing various levels of cognitive activity, from reproduction to analysis (complying with Bloom's taxonomy)	Stimulation cognitive and communicative activity, forwarding the dialogic principles of alterocentrism and juxtaposition.
Personalized utterance	Analytical statement, association, comparison, commentary, retrospection, open text markers ("In my view...", "As far as I am concerned...")	Fortifying the subject-based position, paralleling the didactic dialogue with interpersonal interaction.
	<b>Communicative acts of feedback</b>	
Reception of the learner's utterance (active listening)	Exclamation, re-questioning, paraphrasal, commentary, meta-conclusion.	Ensuring communicative support, maintaining the dominant position of the learner in the dialogue.
Evaluation	Relationship statements: "I do appreciate your effort..." Euphemistic statements with negative connotation "Next time you'd better...", "It would be really worthwhile to..."	Exercising the dialogic principle of value oriented treatment, maintaining the positive character of interaction.
Evaluation as a challenge	Referencing the learner's answer (possibly with a summary) with a further commenting question: "So, you want to say that..."	Focusing on the position of the partner, correction of understanding.
Drawing conclusions	Concluding statements, extended commentary, we-statements.	Demonstration of unification, value oriented treatment of each of the participants of interaction.

The discourse strategies tooling the principles of pedagogic dialogue are remarkably performative: employing the respective utterances is actually implementing a dialogical principle. We have defined several practical ideas of how to make pedagogical dialogue be run effectively.

**a) Develop positive perceptive position.**

Both V. Kan-Kalyk (1995) and C. Rogers stressed upon the unconditional acceptance of the learner as well as on the learner-centred approach in which the teacher is but a facilitator of the learner's progress. The evaluative function of the teacher in pedagogic interaction though is inevitably related to assessment and sometimes criticism which makes responding to the learners input in class as well as their behavior and ways particularly challenging if the teacher is willing to implement the dialogic principle of value oriented treatment in the teacher-learner interaction. The reframing technique in discourse layout means avoiding straightforwardly negative evaluative utterances by means of replacing them by ultimately positive and optimistic ones cherishing the undisputable value of each individual.

*You're terribly lazy. → I wish you would work harder.*

*She is not very intelligent. → This subject is not quite her thing. She may be better in others.*

*He is bossy. → He is likely to be a good leader in the future.*

*She is weird. → She is an original personality.*

**b) Referencing the learner.**

Making a thorough account of the learner's utterances, using them as a springboard in furthering the dialogue is a direct discourse representation of several dialogic principles: alterocentrism, metaposition of the teacher and value oriented treatment. Instead of promoting the pre-formed statements of ultimate truth and knowledge, as it is the case in the directive paradigm, the dialogically disposed teacher makes the learner's idea the starting point of the discussion, demonstrating its acceptance and value, comments, adds examples or his own ideas to the one originated by the learner, regulating the line of a discussion not by the prescribed view but rather mutually, in cooperation with the learner.

*The subject of discussion: Boomerang Generation (an ESL class).*

*"Boomerang kids" leave home to go to university but then return to the nest in their twenties. With fewer jobs around, they find it's cheaper to live at home with mum and dad. Do you think the terms of living together again are the same or different?*

*Student: They can't be the same, because these kids are not the same as before.*

*Teacher: Yes, they have definitely changed after the time away from home. Could you specify more on what you mean?*

**c) Adhering to the Compliment – Criticism – Compliment Format of Evaluation.**

Another technique applicable in the context of exercising the value oriented treatment is "amortization" of criticism via contextualizing them in two

complimentary statements before and after the criticism actually takes place. This technique is indispensable in withholding the value oriented treatment in pedagogical discourse.

*Example 3:*

*"You've made a great introduction with multiple interactive elements. In terms of structure of the main body I'd rather recommend you to include more examples of what you are stating. It will make your presentation more adapted to the listener. This kind of layout will be great for those audiences that are expert in the field you represent. But in total, you've done a good job and obviously invested a lot of time in it. Thank you so much."*

**d) Building productive scenarios.**

In order to maintain a positive interaction line as well as contribute to supporting the learner's self esteem the dialogically disposed teacher will enhance productive internality in a child minimizing the external locus of control and guiding him out of the state of inner standstill. The point is to emphasize the lack of effort, rather than lack of talent in case of failure, to motivate the learner to feel hopeful and optimistic about his future achievements.

*e.g. The result of the test does not mean you can't make it in Maths, but that you should have prepared better.*

Some other discourse techniques are:

- avoiding generalizations and conclusions as to the learner's behavior, rather concentrating on particular acts of behavior:

*"You are monopolizing in today's discussion" instead of "You always strive to be the centre of attention";*

- formulating the I-messages that contribute to the subject-subject communication scheme escaping the routine judgmental sequence refocusing the recipient's attention from their act to the consequences of it:

*"I feel disappointed when you act like this" instead of "That's a nasty way to behave."*

- "Frankline's technique": agreement – positive comment – substantiation of the comment – description of the conditions favourable for the idea to be applied – your own suggestion.

*St: I think we should arrange the desk in the class so that they would suit the microsession format.*

*Tch: Yes, that would be great. Then we wouldn't sit with our backs to each other. On the other hand, it would be good if all the lessons presupposed holding microsessions. Maybe the hexagon arrangement will do better?*

Concentrating on the interactive rather than instructional aspect of the pedagogic discourse, we performed an analysis of young teachers' communicative acts in terms of their reference to dialogic principles in teacher-learner interaction. The control group included 57 young teachers doing pre-service training in Vinnytsia secondary schools and those with no more than 2 years of teaching experience. This contingent was purposefully selected with the view of defining

how efficient the current system of university teacher training is in terms of developing dialogic dispositions in future educators. The experts, teachers and university methodologists, were invited for inclusive observation of pedagogic students' communication styles at lessons of the humanitarian cycle making an account of the three basic parameters:

- the subject position of the teacher (personalized reflection of the subject matter under study);
- implementation of group cohesion strategies (We-statements, encouragement techniques);
- interpersonal communication line (dialogic speech and active listening techniques).

#### **4. Results and discussion**

As an important finding of the observation there were revealed three main types of the teacher's communicative behavior within the standard instructional discourse.

The teacher representing the *dialogic* pedagogic style is intrinsically motivated for conscious dispositions for dialogic communication as existentially significant intercourse. The verbal form is substantiated by corresponding non-verbal affective parameters. There can be observed cognitive reflexive interpersonal space, intensive emotional interchange and intercorrelation, group cohesion strategies, as well as those regulating intra group psychological processes. The discourse is free and interpretative, adaptable for transformations and redistribution of accents.

The verbal parameters specifying this interaction type can be viewed as dialogical if the teacher:

- carries out fair distribution of communicative initiative;
- uses the learners' perspectives and standpoints as a springboard for his or her own inferences;
- brings the verbal contribution of each of the learners to a logical completion;
- provides full feedback, heeding and reducing the children's insecurities;
- has a discretionary strategy of intercourse organization;
- makes a deliberate account of individual mental filters in the organization of subject oriented dialogue: associations, emotional memory, experience, inferences, individual classifications, preferences and generalizations.
- Non-directive guidance through the subject terrain.

The *semi-dialogic style* is represented by high communicative activity and initiative. Nevertheless, the subject-based cooperation is devoid of the interpersonal dialogic line. The majority of the teacher's communicative acts are allocated with a particular number of certain students. The dialogic strategy appears to be winding down in the course of communication which leads to a distinct role and status distribution between the teacher and the learners.

The discursive patterns are outwardly similar to those represented in the dialogic type, having some deviations towards the directive style though:

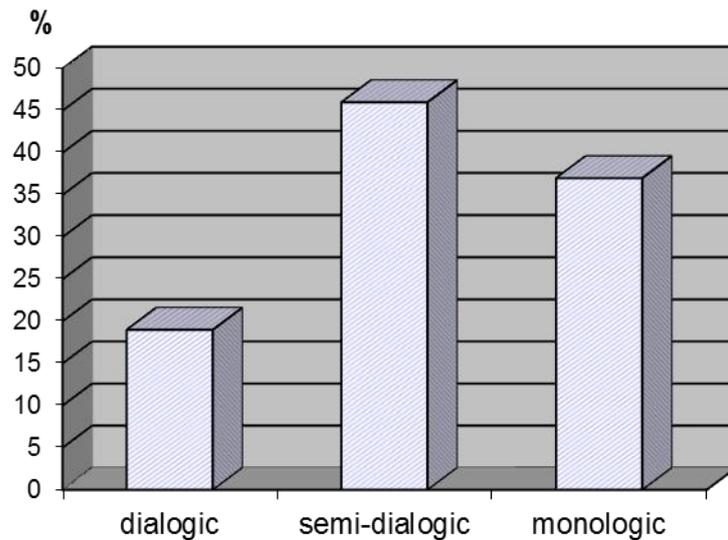
- the teacher employs incentive patterns, I-messages as well as other installments testifying to the subject position;
- the repertoire remains to be open and interpretative rather than rigidly institutionalized and reproductive;
- being marked by communicative intensity as well as emotionally charged, the teacher's sequence is interspersed by utterances coordinating the cognitive positions of teacher and learner (agreement, disagreement, balancing and clarification);
- the discourse line, however, is sporadically one-track, with distinctive features of cognitive monopoly mainly guiding the learners towards predetermined conclusions;
- the teacher's input significantly dominates over the learners' contributions lacking feedback markers, the teacher tends to interrupt, ignore or dismiss the learners' utterances, resorting to attention simulations.

The *monologic* style comprises the speech acts denoting an authoritative and directive instruction line without the interpersonal background or communicative initiative. The interpersonal distance is caused by the strict demarcation of role and status frames stemming from an understanding of teacher-learner interaction as that of exclusively subject-based academic work. The discourse is strictly abridged to a set of classroom expressions carrying no intentions of subjectivizing the discussion or activating the learners' own standpoints or productive rather than reproductive speech. The remarkably distinctive features of this dimension of classroom interaction are as follows:

- the range of the speech acts is reduced to informative, directive phrases, declarations of the utterances' reception and their emotionally neutral assessment;
- the I-messages are of formal character lacking personalized content thus never revealing the teacher's own perspectives on the subject matter;
- lack of discussion initiative, no markers of the interpretative discourse;
- minimal feedback, low responsiveness, both verbal and non-verbal, as to the learners' utterances.

The focal speech acts to be identified were those representing dialogic initiative and dialogic feedback. The data was gathered and summarized in accordance with the method of interactive discourse analysis by N. Pavlova (2005: **Ошибка! Источник ссылки не найден.**). The difference was, however, in the fact that while N. Pavlova focused on the subject-based pedagogic communication, our analysis primarily concerned the interpersonal aspect related to the formation and regulation of teacher-learner relationships.

The quantitative and qualitative analysis of the acquired data revealed the following statistics in the level distribution of dialogic competences in young teachers:



Thus, 19% of teacher-students can be referred to as those exercising the dialogic interaction style in their teaching practice, 46% are those representing the semi-dialogic style and the remaining 37% mainly use directive monologic teaching and interaction strategies.

The lack of dialogic communication competences in young teachers exposed in the course of this study reveals the causes much deeper than lack of teacher-student communication experience, these rather refer to the axiological, motivational, cognitive and personality domains. Before all, it is the lack of intrinsic prosocial motivation which prevents young teachers from value-oriented treatment of the child as well as directing their effort at dialogic communication as a self-valuable form of social life rather than a favourable background for classroom activities. Furthermore, it is the non-productive cognitive position showing itself in overall stereotypical perception of learners and teacher-learner relationships instead of deliberate construction of productive scenarios of interpersonal communication. The subject position naturally essential for a subject-subject dialogic intercourse appears to be dominated by reproductive manner of presentation without any references to the teacher's own perception and understanding of subject matter which also affects the interpersonal ground which is ensured by the partners' open statement of their views and standpoints. The personality aspect i.e. such qualities as openness, authenticity, internal subject position, tolerance appear to be suppressed by the functional role position involving the instructional aspect only. Sporadic dialogic patterns are performed without any pedagogic connotation or any account of pedagogic functions of interpersonal communication.

## 5. Conclusions

Sharing an understanding of pedagogic dialogue as an emotionally symmetric (mutually open) mutually enriching interpersonal communication we made an

attempt to find its representation in actual discourse patterns of teacher-learner classroom interaction.

The inclusive observation of young teachers' communicative behavior in the classroom context revealed low percentage of teachers representing the dialogic interaction style in their professional practice. This testifies to lack of intrinsic motivation to this communication style as well as that of conceptual understanding of the nature of pedagogic communication as such. Consequently, the praxeological parameters of dialogic style appear sporadically with individual teachers having inborn personal qualities ensuring the subject position and dialogic disposition in communication in general.

In our view, possible solutions lie in creation of a unified university communication policy based upon the principles of dialogue, actualization of the humanitarian potential of pedagogy-related courses responsible for conceptualization of the subject matter later reflected in students' own standpoints and interpretation, introduction of the subject matter of dialogic communication into theoretical and practical training, implementation of alternative forms of pre-service teacher training.

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